

VERDEJO

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AWRI

BACKGROUND

Verdejo (ver-DECK-ho) originated in Castilla y León, Spain. The name refers to the green colour of the berries. Traditionally it was mainly restricted to the Rueda region where it was used to make a sherry-style wine. Changes in winemaking practice to reduce oxidation and the introduction of picking at night have allowed fine table wines to be produced from this variety since the 1970s, resulting in a significant expansion in plantings. For example, plantings have grown from 4453ha in 2000 to 16,578ha in 2010. Today it is the fifth most important white variety in Spain, mainly grown in Castilla y León with smaller areas in Castilla-La Mancha and Extremadura. DNA profiling indicates that Albillo de Nava (grown in Rueda) is identical to Verdejo (but not related to either Albillo Mayor or Albillo Real) and that Godello (Gouveio) is a sibling. It is not related to either Verdejo Negro (syn. Verdejo Tinto) or Verdejo Colorado (syn. Pedral). Also, a previously reported relationship with Damaschino (syn. Planta Fina) has been recently disproved. Other synonyms include Boton de Gallo Blanco and Verdeja. Outside of Spain it is almost non-existent with tiny areas planted in both USA and Australia (there are at least two wine producers at present in the Murray Darling and Barossa Valley regions).

VITICULTURE

Budburst is mid-season and maturity is early to mid-season. Vigour is low and yield is moderate. Maximum permitted yield in Rueda is 10 tonnes per hectare for trellised vines. Bunches are small to medium and compact with small to medium thin-skinned berries with a distinctive blue-green bloom. Tolerance of drought and heat is good but it is very susceptible to powdery mildew. Pruning is generally to canes or long spurs due to low to medium bud fertility. Clonal selection in Spain has shown variation between clones—but at the present time there may be only a single clone in Australia.

WINE

Wines in Spain are medium to full-bodied with good acidity and are very aromatic with notes of laurel and bitter almond. Verdejo is used as a single variety or blended, most commonly with Sauvignon Blanc.

For further information on this and other emerging varieties, contact Marcel Essling (marcel.essling@awri.com.au or 08 8313 6600) at The Australian Wine Research Institute to arrange the presentation of the Alternative Varieties Research to Practice program in your region.